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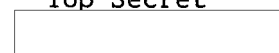
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ISRAEL-LEBANON: Continued Skirmishing

(Information as of 2300 EDT)

//The Israelis shelled West Beirut heavily yesterday. They also continue to withdraw armored units from the Bekaa Valley, but it is not clear whether this is a rotation or reduction of forces.//

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Comment: //The Israelis are concerned that the Palestinians are becoming overly confident about their ability to hold on in West Beirut. They apparently decided to respond in force to a PLO provocation to display their impatience with the slow pace of negotiations to settle the question of the Palestinian presence.//

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Clashes Elsewhere

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//It is still unclear whether the withdrawals indicate a rotation of Israeli units in the Bekaa or a large-scale reduction of forces in the area.

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the Israelis planned to begin releasing reservists from duty in Lebanon last week. An estimated one to two Israeli combat brigades probably remain in the Bekaa Valley.//

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Syrian Attitudes

Minister of Information Iskander presented government views at a news conference yesterday on issues concerning Lebanon. He said that Syrian forces would not leave Lebanon under pressure from any country or while the Israelis remained there.

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Iskander also claimed that Lebanese President Sarkis had recently requested a Syrian withdrawal but that the Syrians had refused because they believed he made the request as a result of Israeli pressure. Iskander's criticism of the US role in the crisis was restrained.

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Comment: Iskander's remarks reflect Syrian anxiety over the lack of movement toward an Israeli withdrawal and an apparent hope that the US will be able to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. His remarks were notable for their almost total lack of reference to the PLO.

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Soviet Activities

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Meanwhile, the Soviet news agency TASS reported yesterday that the Soviet Embassy in East Beirut was hit by Israeli gunfire. TASS said the Israeli Government bears full responsibility. The Israelis subsequently denied the charge and said terrorists were to blame for any attack.

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ARGENTINA: Political Impasse Continues

//The junta remains deadlocked on the problem of selecting a new president.//

//The most prominently mentioned civilian candidate is Argentina's Ambassador to Venezuela, Juan Ramon Aguirre Lanari. He has good contacts in the Army high command, and the other services reportedly would find him acceptable if no consensus military candidate emerges. Recently retired Army generals Domingo Bussi and Eduardo Crespi, who are close to former President Viola, also are under consideration.//

//Air Force commander Lami Dozo continues to push his candidacy despite mounting opposition from the Army. If his candidacy falters, however, the Air Force reportedly will insist on a civilian and reject any Army general. The Navy is arguing for a compromise civilian candidate,

//The junta has decided that the new president will serve until 1 March 1984. The high command, moreover, has decided if a member of the junta becomes president, he will have to resign from the junta before assuming office.//

Comment: //The inability to find a successor reflects divisions in the military on future political and economic policies and on the fate of those closely identified with the loss of the Falklands. The extended negotiations are frustrating civilian leaders, one of whom has condemned the procedure and called for elections to select a successor.//

//Most civilians, however, probably will continue waiting for the junta to set a date for elections, using the time to develop programs, select candidates and set up party organizations. A definite date for elections also could make the new government seem less transitory, perhaps helping decisionmaking on difficult economic and political questions.//

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CHAD: Provisional Government Formed

President Habre has announced the formation of a northern-dominated council of state to oversee day-to-day affairs pending the planned creation of a broad-based government of national unity.

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//The provisional government includes some southerners and a number of officials who have served in previous regimes. The US and France, meanwhile, have had no success in persuading the OAU to keep a token presence in N'Djamena to facilitate talks among the feuding factions and to discourage Libyan meddling.//

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//Former President Goukouni left Cameroon on Sunday. He is rumored to be on his way to Algeria, which last week offered him asylum.//

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Comment: Habre seems to have emphasized competence and experience in appointing his interim government. Although the regime ostensibly is "nonaligned," it probably will take moderate positions as it looks to Washington and Paris for urgently needed food aid and budgetary support.

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Progress toward national reconciliation and a regionally balanced coalition government will be slow. Negotiations between Habre and southern strongman Colonel Kamougue, however, are likely soon.

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There is little chance that peacekeeping forces under OAU auspices will remain in Chad beyond 30 June. Nonetheless, Zaire may unilaterally keep some troops in N'Djamena for a while to try to prevent new clashes.

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CHINA - NORTH KOREA: Developing Closer Ties

The visit to North Korea by Geng Biao--the first by a Chinese defense minister--reflects Beijing's effort to maintain good relations with P'yongyang. [REDACTED]

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China has tried to cultivate better relations with North Korea since last December, when Premier Zhao Ziyang visited P'yongyang. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] North Korea's media coverage of the visit is stressing that bilateral relations, particularly in the military area, are harmonious. [REDACTED]

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Comment: Most members of Geng's delegation are senior political officers, and discussions almost certainly focused on broader strategic and bilateral concerns. The presence of the deputy head of the Army's logistic department, however, suggests that North Korea has reviewed some of its military needs as well. [REDACTED]

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The Chinese previously have used high-level contacts to keep the North Koreans informed about developments in Beijing's relationship with the US--a subject of perennial concern in P'yongyang--and this group almost certainly did the same. Geng also publicly and prominently repeated China's longstanding backing for North Korean overall reunification goals. [REDACTED]

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Geng's statements do not amount to any change in China's policy in Korea. They are, however, designed to reassure P'yongyang of Chinese loyalty as well as to send a message to Washington about China's continued concern over Taiwan. Geng referred to both China and North Korea as divided countries in criticizing the US for its "hegemonist" role in fostering a "two Koreas" policy--a clear parallel with Taiwan and the "two Chinas" issue. [REDACTED]

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USSR: Gromyko's Remarks

Foreign Minister Gromyko, at his press conference yesterday at the UN, reiterated Moscow's view that US arms control proposals are one-sided. He also denied that the Soviet strategic strike exercise last week violated any agreement with the US and that it was unprecedented. In raising the chemical warfare issue, Gromyko stressed the significance of a draft CW agreement the Soviets submitted last week to the UN Special Session on Disarmament. [REDACTED]

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Comment: Gromyko probably held the press conference to counter US charges belittling Soviet arms control policy and President Brezhnev's recent pledge that the USSR will not use nuclear weapons first. The Foreign Minister's tone suggests the Soviets are disappointed in the limited support they have garnered at the UN Special Session for their arms control proposals. [REDACTED]

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UK: Defense Policy

The US defense attache reports the British Government will publish its delayed Defense White Paper today with an addendum stating it is too soon to discuss in detail the lessons learned from the war. Another, more comprehensive White Paper will be issued in the fall.

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Comment: //The White Paper, which apparently supports the central thrust of the 1981 Defense Review, will be the focus of considerable public and private debate. The government probably does not believe that the crisis over the Falklands nullifies the rationale behind previously proposed cuts in the surface fleet. It is aware, however, that Conservative backbenchers will support calls already coming from the Royal Navy for restoration of the cuts. Prime Minister Thatcher may respond by canceling the sale of the carrier Invincible to Australia and by approving qualitative improvements in frigate and destroyer construction programs, but she is less likely to restore the other cuts announced before the conflict.

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